

HCS HB 67 -- ELECTIONS

SPONSOR: Dugger

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Elections by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on State and Local Governments by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill changes the laws regarding elections. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Allows a person who is in the federal service or who is a covered voter, as specified in the bill, who has been discharged from military service, has returned from a military deployment or activation, or has separated from employment outside of the United States after the specified deadline to register to vote, if he or she is otherwise qualified to register, in person before the election authority until 5:00 p.m. on the Friday prior to an election if he or she can show sufficient evidence of qualifying for late registration. A covered voter, as defined in the bill, who is eligible to register and vote in this state is allowed to vote in any federal, statewide, or ballot initiative election by submitting a federal postcard application to vote by absentee ballot or by submitting a federal postcard application at the polling place even though the person is not registered;

(2) Adds provisions regarding voting machines to reflect current technology;

(3) Allows certified participants in the Address Confidentiality Program established under Sections 589.660 to 589.681, RSMo, to vote by absentee ballot if they have safety concerns about voting in person on election day;

(4) Requires, in the event of a declared state or national emergency, an election authority to provide an emergency worker as specified in the bill, upon request, an absentee ballot via mail, facsimile, or electronic transmission and accept the ballot via mail, facsimile, or electronic transmission. If the emergency is declared after the deadline for requesting absentee ballots, emergency workers must be eligible to request absentee ballots until 5:00 p.m. on the Monday immediately prior to an election. In order to be counted, an absentee ballot must be received by the close of the polls on election day;

(5) Makes procedural changes regarding the counting of absentee ballots to conform with current practice and allows absentee ballots cast in person to be counted without additional steps

involving ballot envelopes;

(6) Prohibits anyone found guilty of or who has pled to a state felony or a federal felony or misdemeanor or who is delinquent in the payment of state income tax, personal property tax, municipal tax, real property tax, or a fee office tax owed to the state from qualifying as a candidate for elective public office;

(7) Specifies that Sections 115.307 to 115.405, must not apply to candidates for special district offices; township offices in township organization counties; or city, town, and village offices; and

(8) Specifies that an application for a military-overseas ballot is timely if received by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday, instead of the Wednesday, prior to the election.

The bill contains an emergency clause.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill removes duplicative ballot counting procedures and allows federal service members and out-of-country citizens to register to vote for the maximum possible time before an election to accommodate their situations.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Dugger and Darryl Kempf, Missouri Association of Counties.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.